

EXPLORING THE LIVES OF DIASPORIC WOMEN IN NOVELS BY CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI, BHARATHI MUKHERJEE, AND ANITA RAO BADAMI

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ABSTRACT:

This article aims to analyse and explore the themes of migration, hybridity, and the gynocentric worldview in the novels of Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The purpose of this research is to highlight the challenges faced by migrant women in the contemporary, interconnected world. The text explores the complex themes of identity crisis, cultural clash, alienation, assimilation challenges, and psychological trauma experienced by migrant Indian women. It seeks to find solutions by analysing the selected novels of Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

Keywords: -Compare and contrast, migration, hybridity, gynocentric worldview, rationale, vicissitudes, identity crisis, cultural clash, alienation, assimilation, psychological trauma

INTRODUCTION:

"A woman's writing possesses a distinct essence that is inherent to femininity. At its finest, it embodies the truest form of femininity. The challenge lies in accurately defining the characteristics that make it feminine." "Virginia Woolf"

We live in a world where the quest for stability and the longing for change coexist, where the ongoing battle between global ambitions and the need to preserve local identity remains unresolved. Globalisation has emerged as a significant facilitator of the transnational lifestyle, with crossing borders becoming an integral part of modern living.

However, the experience of feeling displaced, yearning for a return to one's roots, a deep longing for the homeland combined with a sense of loss that profoundly influences the mindset of individuals living in diaspora, the challenge of grappling with identity, and the arduous journey of assimilating into a new culture are common threads among those who have left their native land for a foreign country. A possible outcome of this conflict is the rise of hybridity. The ebb and flow of globalisation and nativism is a recurring theme, with neither holding a lasting grip on the spotlight. An ideal state is one that balances both local and global perspectives, maintaining stability while also being open to adaptation. It exists in a unique space that lies between different realms. This is a space where diversity flourishes, constantly

present and continuously developing. Hybridity has captured the interest of many scholars, garnering considerable attention and inspiring extensive research in the realm of translation studies and beyond.

Analytical concern of Diasporic Women in the select novels of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharathi Mukherjee, and Anita Rao Badami

Gynocentrism is a discourse that advocates for a feminist perspective, emphasising female consciousness, women-centered beliefs, identity crises, culture, and social consciousness. The term comes from the combination of "Gyno," which means woman, and "Kentron," which means centre. In addition, it challenges the widely accepted and impartial idea of masculine norms, emphasising their inherent gendered nature. Examining things from an alternative standpoint, the embrace of masculine norms throughout history has resulted in the depiction of the female gender as lesser, subservient, and deficient. Gynocentrism, therefore, emphasises the documentation of sexual differences and femininity in a positive manner.

Showalter argues that there is an underlying aspiration for individual achievement and ambition present in the works of both female and male writers. Novels that predominantly delve into the realms of romantic love fantasies are classified as (Showalter 195)

'Gynocentrism' delves into the historical, stylistic, thematic, and structural elements of women's writing. It aims to understand the uniqueness of women's writing not due to sexism, but rather as a crucial aspect of the female experience. From a philosophical perspective, Gynocentrism prioritises females as the primary focus of attention, often overlooking other aspects. At times, there may be a tendency to overlook or unfairly assign blame to men for different issues, resulting in unfair treatment.

There has been a notable increase in the popularity of Indian writing in English. In the realm of fiction, it has brought forth a new era and has received countless praises both at home and abroad. Indian women writers are defying the entrenched power of the patriarchy. They have risen above being mere pawns under human control. They have showcased their worth in the field of literature, excelling in both the calibre and abundance of their work, effortlessly maintaining their reputation. Today, the works of Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Geetha Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, and numerous other authors have left a profound impression on readers of Indian fiction in English.

Authors from the Indian Diaspora have garnered considerable recognition in recent years for the stimulating concepts explored in their literary creations. When different languages and cultures interact, they experience a significant transformation. These writers often explore the complexities of nostalgia and the challenges of adapting to new environments. They actively participate in the culture of their homeland while also adapting to and embracing the cultural environment of the host land. However, when looking at diasporic literature from a broader perspective, it becomes clear that this type of literature has a significant impact in promoting cross-cultural understanding, bridging gaps between nations, encouraging global connections, and even advocating for peace worldwide. Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are widely recognised as influential Indian diaspora writers who have made substantial contributions in the academic realm.

Bharati Mukherjee, born on July 27, 1940, and passed away on January 28, 2017, was a highly respected Indo-American writer and esteemed professor at the University of California, Berkeley. She has written a diverse collection of literary works, encompassing both fiction and non-fiction genres. Mukherjee has fully embraced the identity of an American writer, choosing not to define herself solely as a writer who has migrated. Her body of work encompasses a wide array of literary creations, spanning from novels and collections of short stories to a captivating memoir in the non-fiction genre. She received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1988 for her exceptional work, 'The Middle and other stories'. She has received acclaim for her impressive literary achievements, including *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Desirable Daughters*, *Jasmine*, and *Wife*.

Bharati Mukherjee delves into the complex obstacles encountered by Indian-American women in the USA as a result of migration and expatriation. She also questions the conventional depiction of common stereotypes, and her characters distinguish themselves from the marginalised immigrants residing in the liminal zone between East and West. Mukherjee delves into the intricate dynamics that immigrants navigate in the transitional realm between cultures, shedding light on the distinct chances for self-expression and empowerment that emerge from this intermediary condition.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, born on July 29, 1956, is a versatile writer who has made significant contributions to the fields of poetry, essays, fiction, and short stories. She has also garnered acclaim as a book reviewer. She is a poet with a rich cultural background. Her short story collection "Arranged Marriage and other Stories" was honoured with the esteemed American Book Award in 1995. Her works extend to various countries, encompassing the United States and India. She frequently explores the experiences of South Asian migrants.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a writer of the Indian Diaspora, has expertly incorporated the theme of the 'immigrant sensibility' into her fiction. After immersing herself in the United States, she has developed a deep appreciation for the diverse cultures and ways of life in both India and the U.S.A. She delves into the stories of Indians who choose to move to the United States for various reasons, such as career prospects, education, and business endeavours. Banerjee's impressive body of work, which includes *Sister of My Heart*, *The Vine of Desire*, *Queen of Dreams*, *Mistress of Spices*, and *Arranged Marriage*, beautifully portrays the intricate emotions and experiences of immigrants in the United States. As people transition from one country to another, a multitude of changes occur in their lives.

In this era of globalisation, the terms such as transnationals, diasporas, expatriates, migrants, and more have become increasingly prevalent, and the distinctions between them are frequently unclear. Recently, a wave of talented south Asian women writers has emerged, leaving their distinct imprint on the world of Diasporic Literature, a part of the larger realm of post colonial literature. Individuals in diaspora find themselves caught between two worlds, which challenges their sense of belonging to either nation. Essentially, the metaphor of 'Trishanku' is frequently employed to describe individuals who exist in a state of 'in-betweenness,' particularly immigrants.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is widely recognised as an acclaimed novelist who has received numerous prestigious awards. All her novels revolve around women and the challenges they face as immigrants, drawing from her own rich experiences. She delves into the immigrant experience of South

Asian women in the US. In her writings, she focuses on the intricately nuanced politics of the marginalised. She passionately advocates for the betterment of women's living conditions in distant lands. Bharathi Mukherjee explores the intricate challenges faced by Indian American women in the US due to migration and expatriation.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's writings focus on women, particularly after she left India. She meticulously examines the experiences and circumstances of women in that context. In her novel *The Mistress of Spices*, the character Tilo offers spices that serve not only as a means of sustenance, but also as a remedy for the feelings of homesickness and alienation that plague the Indian immigrants. She is dedicated to fostering connections among individuals through her writing. She brings a fresh perspective to challenge stereotypes and debunk myths. By doing so, she breaks down barriers that separate people from different cultures. In an interview, she candidly expresses her approach to writing as a playful endeavour, blurring the boundaries between the realistic world of the twentieth century in her quest to craft a contemporary fable. Divakaruni employs a challenging approach in her portrayal of diasporic identity. She delves into the elements of fable to highlight the challenges faced by immigrants who arrive in the land of opportunity with its gleaming pavements and lavish roofs.

The central character Tilottama is highly skilled in extracting the essence of spices and utilising their healing properties to alleviate pain, solve various issues, and improve the quality of people's lives. Divakaruni skillfully portrays the complex emotions experienced by Indian women navigating life in a foreign land. She has skillfully captured the essence of tradition in her homeland, as well as the struggles experienced by immigrants in their adopted country. Divakaruni's writing highlights the notion that diaspora encompasses more than just scattering, but rather encompasses a sense of unity and numerous personal journeys. It is clear that the majority of Indian expatriates who move to America experience the challenge of navigating different cultures, leading to a sense of detachment and the subsequent efforts to adapt, assimilate, and embrace. In a nutshell, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni adeptly reveals the intricate connections between women and the prevalent issues of alienation, displacement, and discrimination.

Bharathi Mukherjee is a highly respected and accomplished Indian diasporic writer who has made her home in the United States. She explores diverse diasporic identities in her writings and delves into the complexities of cross-cultural issues. In her writings, she explores the dynamic nature of cultural boundaries, migration, ethnicity, and globalisation, which are central themes in her literary works. In her novels, she skillfully captures the experiences of immigrants in a foreign land and vividly depicts their struggles and triumphs.

In her novels *"Jasmine and Wife"*, she explores the experiences of two young women in the United States, each facing unique challenges. Both individuals endure intense physical, mental, and emotional suffering that deeply affects them, ultimately leading them to resort to violence. Despite facing numerous challenges, Jasmine emerges victorious, gaining a newfound understanding of herself and completely transforming her life. Mukherjee has skillfully captured the emotions of diasporic women with precise and eloquent language. Anita Rau Badami is a rising star in the dynamic world of Indian sub-continental literature.

Ms. Badami, a seasoned journalist, has been residing in Canada since 1991. Her debut novel, *Tamarind Men*, garnered widespread praise and propelled Badami to become a bestselling author in the

Canada Caribbean region. She was honoured with the prestigious Marian Engel award for her second novel, *The Hero's Walk*. In her novels, Badami beautifully captures the complex emotions of living in a diaspora and the joy of navigating the space between two worlds.

"Writing a novel would have been challenging if I hadn't left India. The physical distance has provided me with valuable perspective amidst my strong emotions." I spent twenty-nine years in India and ten years here, so I have a strong connection to both places. I find myself in a perpetual state of being torn between two realms, constantly reflecting on the past while simultaneously cherishing the beauty of two captivating realms that exist within my imagination and my heart.

While her novels draw from personal experiences, they have a universal appeal. She meticulously examines the immigrant women, who find themselves trapped amidst conflicting forces such as caste, gender, and culture. She has skillfully highlighted the challenges faced by immigrant women, demonstrating a deep understanding of the subject. Upon close examination of the chosen novels by these three women novelists, a discernible pattern emerges in their writing. Their efforts to cultivate unique identities, detached from any established theory, are both noteworthy and genuine. In the portrayal of women, they have defied conventions and shattered stereotypes, presenting transnational women as more than just victims. They have provided readers with insights into how their characters triumph over adversity in their novels.

CONCLUSION:

This article revealed that Gynocentrism is a feminist discourse that emphasizes female consciousness, women-centered beliefs, identity crises, culture, and social consciousness. It challenges the widely accepted idea of masculine norms and emphasizes the documentation of sexual differences and femininity in a positive manner. Gynocentrism delves into the historical, stylistic, thematic, and structural elements of women's writing, aiming to understand the uniqueness of women's writing not due to sexism but rather as a crucial aspect of the female experience.

Indian writing in English has gained popularity, with Indian women writers defying the entrenched power of the patriarchy and showcasing their worth in the field of literature. Indian diaspora writers have made substantial contributions in the academic realm, promoting cross-cultural understanding, bridging gaps between nations, encouraging global connections, and advocating for peace worldwide. Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are two influential Indian diaspora writers who have made substantial contributions in the academic realm. Mukherjee delves into the complex obstacles encountered by Indian-American women in the USA as a result of migration and expatriation, questioning the conventional depiction of common stereotypes. Divakaruni has made significant contributions to poetry, essays, fiction, and short stories, often exploring the experiences of South Asian migrants.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian diaspora writer, has a deep appreciation for the diverse cultures and ways of life in both India and the U.S.A. Her works, including *Sister of My Heart*, *The Vine of Desire*, *Queen of Dreams*, *Mistress of Spices*, and *Arranged Marriage*, beautifully portray the intricate emotions and experiences of immigrants in the U.S.

In this era of globalization, terms like transnationals, diasporas, expatriates, migrants, and more have become increasingly prevalent. A wave of talented south Asian women writers has emerged, leaving a distinct imprint on the world of Diasporic Literature, a part of the larger realm of post colonial literature.

Divakaruni's writings focus on women and the challenges they face as immigrants, drawing from her own rich experiences. She focuses on the intricately nuanced politics of the marginalized and advocates for the betterment of women's living conditions in distant lands. Bharathi Mukherjee, another Indian diasporic writer, explores diverse diasporic identities and delves into the complexities of cross-cultural issues. In her novels, she skillfully captures the experiences of immigrants in a foreign land and vividly depicts their struggles and triumphs.

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